



Senator Shan S. Tsutsui

Hawaii State Senate

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**STATEMENT OF SENATOR SHAN S. TSUTSUI
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
MAUI NEWS / VIEWPOINT**

February 17, 2006

TSUTSUI EXPRESSES CONCERNS ON SUPERFERRY OPERATIONS

Earlier last year, the Hawaii Superferry Company sent out targeted mailers soliciting public support of their business venture and I, like many of my colleagues in the Senate and House received such post cards. I read each one, and I share the same sentiment of many of the respondents. I do not oppose the concept that is the Superferry. In fact, I like the idea of having the flexibility and much needed inter-island travel alternative that the Superferry has proposed and plans to offer, but at what cost? What I don't agree with is the way that the Superferry organization has been doing business with the State and the public at-large.

Last year promises were made to make every attempt to talk to the public. To allow public testimony and to meet with state, county and local business leaders to set in motion a viable plan of action so that the community could be certain that there would be no interruption of local canoe, fisherman and surf club activities and current harbor business operations such as Young Brothers, Matson, and NCL America. To date that has not happened.

What I have read in the Maui News over the last couple of weeks seriously concerns me. With the state agreeing to some \$40 million in taxpayer financed harbor and infrastructure upgrades to accommodate the ferry, they owe it to all people, not just a select few, of the State of Hawaii to listen to their comments, concerns and frustrations just like that of any corporate board dealing with shareholders. By requesting and accepting taxpayer money for Harbor improvements, Hawaii residents are now, in my opinion, shareholders of Hawaii Superferry and their CEO, Mr. John Garibaldi needs to start talking with them.

The Superferry organization has already gotten away with not doing an Environmental Impact Statement so we don't know what, if any, impact the Hawaii Superferry will have on Hawaii ecosystems. In October of last year, state Transportation Director Rodney Haraga met with state, county and local community members during the Senate Committee on Ways and Means Maui site visit and while standing in the center of Kahului Harbor tried his best to explain what harbor users can expect in regards to ferry implementation.

*"Tsutsui Expresses Concerns
on Superferry Operations"*

February 17, 2006

Page 2

Perhaps they did hold group meetings, which I'm not aware of, however, group meetings do not replace public forums where any member of the community can come forward and express his or her concerns or ideas.

Furthermore, I have read the memorandum of agreement between the State and Hawaii Superferry and there needs to be greater discussion. For instance, the agreement identifies Hawaii Superferry's plans for the emplacement of tents and portable restroom facilities for passenger accommodations at all facilities except Honolulu, and tents for security, vehicle and agricultural inspections. Will this be a massive TSA involved security screening process? How big are these tents and where will you put them? Will they be air-conditioned? How will all of this fit in with current harbor operations such as Matson and Young Brothers? Will this affect their storage space or their movement of cargo containers? How about trucking companies moving in and out of the harbor area, will they be affected? How will you screen vehicles that move from island to island and may possibly contain invasive species in their cargo? And more importantly, what is the actual time required from arrival and check-in at the Superferry terminal to security screening, boarding, and disembarkation from the vessel? Also, I have twice received petitions containing hundreds of signatures expressing concerns about the likelihood of high-speed ferry and whale collisions. What is being done to address those concerns?

These are just some of the questions that have arisen while looking over the operating agreement and there are a lot more. All in all my message is simple. Talk to us! Address the traffic, environmental, illegal drugs, invasive species, and whale concerns that Maui has. Take your company to the public and listen to their concerns, frustrations and ideas. In dealing with Maui's ohana, you can never go wrong when choosing collaboration over isolation.

Finally, if this open dialogue does not happen soon, it may be prudent for the Legislature to reconsider its decision for the remaining \$20-million in state funding for the Superferry before the Senate's April 28th final decking deadline for fiscal bills.

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